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TAGS: [KWBG](#) [PREL](#) [PHUM](#) [IS](#) [ECON](#) [PBTS](#)
SUBJECT: SHAVEI SHOMRON OPENED, IMPROVING SOME, BUT NOT ALL
MOVEMENT IN THE NORTHERN WEST BANK

REF: TEL AVIV 1753

Classified By: Consul General Jake Walles, per reasons 1.4 (b) and (d)

11. (C) Summary and Comment: ConGenOffs visited Shavei Shomron checkpoint, northwest of Nablus, on August 11 and observed an unmanned, open road gate with traffic passing freely. However, OCHA officials reported at 1600 local on 8/11 that the IDF was present at the checkpoint and conducting random vehicle inspections. Local Palestinians said the daily opening will ease travel north to Jenin and Tubas, but area businessmen said this route is not commercially significant, and the opening does not provide access to or from Nablus itself. ConGenOffs observed that Jit checkpoint (four kilometers south of Shavei Shomron on Route 60) was manned August 11 limiting the opening's positive impact. Post assesses that opening Shavei Shomron daily is a positive development that will ease movement between some parts of the northern West Bank, but without easing access to Nablus itself or facilitating significant commercial traffic, the opening will not noticeably impact the area's economy. In addition, if Jit is re-manned on a regular basis, any positive impact will be undermined. Photos at <http://www.state.sgov.gov/p/nea/jerusalem>. End Summary and Comment.

From Roadblock to Checkpoint

12. (C) Poloff and Econoff visited Shavei Shomron checkpoint on Route 60 northwest of Nablus August 11 and observed an unmanned, open road gate with Palestinian traffic passing through. Shavei Shomron has been closed to all traffic since the Second Intifada, effectively closing the route between Jenin and points south. According to press, as of August 9, Shavei Shomron will be open daily 6 a.m. to 6 p.m. Over twenty minutes mid-morning August 11, ConGenOffs observed 23 private cars, 13 trucks, 11 taxis, and 2 ambulances cross through the road gate. The previously manned IDF outpost next to the road gate was vacant. IDF soldiers were present at the IDF base next to the checkpoint and an IDF jeep sat nearby.

13. (C) OCHA officials visiting the checkpoint at 1600 local on August 11 reported that the IDF was present at Shavei Shomron and conducting random vehicle inspections, but that Palestinian traffic continued to flow through at a "reasonable" rate.

Nablus Residents: Shavei Shomron Opening
Helpful, But Other Obstacles Block Movement

14. (C) Prior to August 9, the locked road gate at Shavei Shomron cut the West Bank's major north-south thoroughfare -- Route 60 -- in half northwest of Nablus, forcing Palestinian traffic to divert to smaller roads through village centers

and poorly-maintained mountain roads. With Shavei Shomron open, a Palestinian traveling from the Beit El checkpoint outside Ramallah can move along Route 60 passing through three additional checkpoints (Zaatara, Jit, and Shavei Shomron) to reach Jenin without leaving the highway. Taxi drivers south of Shavei Shomron told ConGenOffs that opening the roadblock eased travel north to Jenin, Tubas and a nearby hospital.

15. (C) However, Nablus businessman Ali Anabtawi, in a conversation with Econoff August 12, predicted that there may only be two commercial trucks daily that will take advantage of this opening. He also underscored that opening the roadblock does not affect access to the historic commercial center of Nablus, which is controlled by the Bayt Iba checkpoint. According to Anabtwawi, of the 10-15 commercial trucks/day able to leave Nablus via Bayt Iba, &maybe one or two8 will pass through the open Shavei Shomron checkpoint en route to Jenin markets. Workers at a stone and tile factory south of Shavei Shomron also told EconOff August 11 that they are more concerned about Bayt Iba checkpoint and associated roadblocks to the east, which restrict access from Nablus to Route 60.

Jit checkpoint re-manned

16. (C) On Route 60, between Shavei Shomron and the villages and cities south of Nablus, the Jit checkpoint was manned by an IDF APC and two soldiers. Poloff and Econoff observed 23 cars lined up at Jit, which Post has not observed manned in over six months. OCHA officials describe Jit as a "partial

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checkpoint" that the GOI occasionally mans.

Comment

17. (C) Opening Shavei Shomron for twelve hours a day is a positive development that will ease movement between some parts of the northern West Bank. However, the opening does not ease access to Nablus itself nor facilitate significant commercial traffic. In addition, if the move is coupled with the re-manning of Jit, as observed August 11, the positive impact of the opening of Shavei Shomron will be more limited and less predictable.

WALLES